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THE CONDOR

An Illustrated Magazine
of Western Ornithology

Published Bi-Monthly by the Cooper Ornithological Club of California.

JOSEPH GRINNELL, Editor, - Berkeley, Cal.
J. EUGENE LAW, Business Manager, Hollywood, Cal.
W. LEE CHAMBERS, Assistant Business Manager,
Santa Monica, Cal.

WILLIAM L. FINLEY } Associate Editors
ROBERT B. ROCKWELL }

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EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The lay bird-student might be lead to believe from the trend of current comment that observations on the habits of birds, unaccompanied by photographs, are now-a-days scarcely considered worthy of publication. This is certainly far from true. We even suspect that articles of an inferior value from both a scientific and literary standpoint sometimes appear in print chiefly because striking photographs are furnished with them. We would not for a moment discourage anyone from the pursuit of bird photography. But we wish to emphasize here that the day is not likely to come when carefully written descriptive essays based upon conscientious and accurate observation will cease to be of much more scientific value than the usual run of illustrations. The manipulation of the camera may even absorb the attention of the operator, and result in his overlooking traits of behavior of the subject, which would be detected by the intent and undistracted observer. Descriptive articles without illustrations (as well as with) are solicited for publication in THE CONDOR.

Correspondents in *Bird-Lore* relative to the cat-question seem to be agreed on the point that cats in general are inimical to bird-life, tho there are instances in which felines have proved quite harmless. We are no more sure of anything than that house-cats (that is "pets"), as well as those "gone wild", cause an

immense mortality among birds, especially in the nesting season. The nature of "tabby" away from home, seems wholly altered. She is shy, alert and blood-thirsty. We will confess to having shot many a cat on our home place in Pasadena, caught in the act of destroying nestlings or immediately after killing a bird, which report subsequently affirmed to have been the cherished pet of a neighboring household. We are ungracious enough to admit of our joy in having ended the careers of these cats. "Cherished pets" of a murderous nature should be kept at home. The Audubon Societies could probably pursue a no more effective line of work than the propagation of sentiment against domestic cats, followed up by measures to secure their extermination along with Cooper and Sharp-shinned Hawks.

A party of Cooper Club members left San Pedro on March 26 on Jack London's boat, "The Snark," to cruise among the islands south along the Mexican Coast. Virgil W. Owen, Chester Lamb and Pingree I. Osburn compose the party, and their purpose is to collect reptiles (alive and in alcohol), insects, birds, mammals, and whatever else of interest to the naturalist they may find. The return of the expedition is expected during the latter part of May. It is said that most of the material they get will go to an Eastern museum.

The last of December, 1908, the young bird of the year belonging to the pair of Condors which have their home in the mountains near Pasadena, was shot by a former constable, Samuel L. Wallis. An attempt was made to sell the bird, resulting in this information getting out of its intended channel. Thru the efforts of Cooper Club members and the commendable activity of Game Warden Morgan of Los Angeles, evidence was secured, Wallis was brought to trial, and a conviction was obtained. But the Justice, in passing sentence, neglected to give an alternative of a jail term if the fine (\$50) were not paid; and so, because of the technicality, Wallis smiled and paid not. Now, however, he has been made deputy county assessor; and the Game Warden has discovered another technicality which balances the first: Wallis's pay is garnisheed and out of his first month's salary comes the \$50! The notoriety of this case has become so wide, that it is believed that anyone else possess of the notion that protected birds may be illegally killed with impunity will hesitate long. The bird killed by Wallis was confiscated and forwarded to the State Museum. No permits are issued by the State Game Commission for the taking of Condors by anyone for any purpose whatsoever. The pair of adult birds, to which last year's young one belonged, were, as far as can be ascertained, uninjured, and it is to be hoped that this year's youngster will reach maturity safely. The aerie has been kept a secret by certain Cooper Club members for several years, and every effort made to secure its protection. It was here that Finley and Bohlman made their photographic studies.

J. R. Pemberton and H. W. Carriger are spending the last two weeks of May looking into the ornithology of the mountains back of Kings City.

"Bird News" is the title of a new bird journal edited by Dr. F. W. D'Evelyn from offices at 717 Market Street, San Francisco. Volume I, nos. 1 and 2, January-February and March-April, 1909, are at hand, and show many points of interest. As this is the first magazine to occupy its field (aviculture) in America, there seems no reason why it should not thrive apace. We wish it and its genial editor every success. Those of our readers interested in birds as pets should invest 75 cents in a year's subscription to "Bird News."

The Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California is represented in the field by the following parties: Harry S. Swarth and Allen E. Hasselborg left Juneau, Alaska, on April 8, in a power boat with convenient equipment, to work the series of islands along the southeastern Alaskan coast between Frederick Sound and Dixon Entrance. Six months will be consumed in this trip, which is known as the 1909 Alexander Expedition. Frank Stephens and assistant left San Diego March 1, and are working in the Colorado Desert. Later they will travel by team slowly north into the southern San Joaquin country, where they will work until the last of October. Miss Annie M. Alexander, with Miss Louise Kellogg, Walter P. Taylor and Charles H. Richardson, has begun a three month's investigation of the fauna of the Virgin Valley region of northern Nevada. This area is probably one of the least known parts of the West from a zoological standpoint, and collections of mammals, birds, and reptiles from there together with the accompanying field-notes are expected to furnish results of exceptional interest.

President William L. Finley, of the Oregon Audubon Society, is active in securing the enforcement of bird laws in his State. His latest coup is the seizure of a great quantity of aigrettes illegally in the possession of some nine millinery dealers of Portland. Arrests were also made, the outcome of which was at last accounts sure to be in favor of the bird-protectors. The particular point in view in the present instance is the stoppage of the destruction of the native Egrets of eastern Oregon, a most worthy cause.

The following courses will be offered in the Summer Session of the University of California, at Berkeley, June 21 to July 31, 1909:

1. The Birds, Mammals, and Reptiles of California.

A course designed to acquaint the student with our common terrestrial vertebrates, and thus of value to teachers of zoology and nature-study. How to identify birds, mammals, and reptiles; their habits and life-histories; beneficial and injurious species; the songs of birds; migration; geographical distribution and variation as exhibited in the fauna of California; preservation of specimens, and the care and use of a school museum. Lectures, laboratory work, and field trips. 2 units.

2. Systematic Ornithology.

An examination and application of the methods of classification, as illustrated by the research collection of 23,000 birds; the significance of geographic variation and isolation in the processes of evolution; feather-structure, molt and abrasion; methods of field work; preparation of study skins; recording of field observations; cataloging of a collection. Lectures, laboratory and field work. 1 unit, or more, according to the time the student can devote to the subject.

The lectures are to be given by J. Grinnell in the Research Room of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

As a result of the April meeting of the A. O. U. Committee on Nomenclature, which cleaned up a large number of pending cases, the manuscript for the new Check-List is now practically finished. We have it from an authoritative source that there will be no further delay, and that the printing will begin very shortly.

Steps are being taken towards the founding of a new scientific organization with headquarters in San Francisco and to be known as the California Zoological Society. Its chief purpose will be the establishment at a generally accessible locality in the San Francisco Bay region of a zoological park in which a representation of the animals of Western North America in particular may be maintained as nearly as possible under natural conditions. The following are some of the names identified with the movement: J. C. Merriam, D. S. Jordan, W. E. Ritter, W. K. Fisher, J. Grinnell, F. W. D'Evelyn, C. A. Vogelsang.

Judging from galley-proofs we have been privileged to examine, R. C. McGregor's Manual of Philippine Birds will be an extremely creditable work. It is to be issued in two parts, the first part being now nearly ready to distribute. The subject matter includes keys, synonymies, distributions and full descriptions of all known species of Philippine birds.

Dr. W. K. Fisher will again this year conduct his popular summer camp for boys near Lake Tahoe. The members go on pack-trips, fishing, deer hunting and mountain climbing,

the camp thus furnishing a healthful vacation recreation full of the intensest of a boy's pleasures.

CORRESPONDENCE

Editor THE CONDOR:—

Will you permit me to lay aside, for the time being, any connection with THE CONDOR it may be my privilege to claim, and to address you simply as a Cooper Club member and reader of this magazine.

Owing to the fact that something over a page of valuable space in the last number of THE CONDOR was devoted to criticism of my statements, and that at least a part of it was not based upon facts, I feel that in justice to myself it is necessary to answer these strictures, much as I dislike to burden yourself and CONDOR readers with a useless argument.

Judge Henderson begins by calling attention to "several erroneous citations" which, when boiled down, are found to number just three, in one of which Judge Henderson is entirely at fault, and in the remaining two his criticism is so far fetched as to be purely a matter of personal opinion. He follows this with an outline of "The Early Western Surveys," with which most of us became familiar about the time we were learning how to use an identification key.

Now I do not intend to enter into a discussion of the merits of Henderson's criticism, because it is not of sufficient importance. I wish, however, to quote my authority for my use of the phrases "a United States Geological Survey bulletin" and "United States Geological Survey reports", using a small "b" and "r" in "bulletin" and "report" respectively. In W. W. Cooke's "Birds of Colorado," State Agricultural College, Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin No. 37, page 27, will be found my authority for the first phrase; and on page 31 will be found my authority for the second phrase. At the time I used these phrases I considered them accurate enough *for the use to which I put them*. Since that time I have not changed my mind, and under date of April 8, 1909, Prof. Cooke himself writes me that he is of the same opinion.

Had Judge Henderson taken the trouble to look up the date of the first publication of Ridway's "Maxwell's Colorado Museum" instead of guessing at it, he would have saved himself from making the very error that he accuses me of making. Notwithstanding his statement to the contrary, this list *was first published in 1877 in "Field and Forest,"* and my authority for this statement will be found in Cooke's "Birds of Colorado" on page 45, which is corroborated by Prof. Cooke in his letter of April 8th mentioned above.

Only one objection can be made to Prof. Felger's statements and that is that the facts are not as he has stated them. The Rocky Mountain Pine Grosbeak record *is not* Prof. Felger's record any more than it is mine, and his statement that the bird was taken by him and *subsequently* shown to me is also incorrect. As a matter of fact, at the time the record in question was made Prof. Felger was *my guest* and *he was with me* at the time the bird was taken. Whether he or I happened to kill the bird does not affect the ownership of the record in the least. His statement that the bird was taken July 8th instead of July 3rd, as stated in my Mesa County List, carries very little weight in the absence of proof. My notes are plain on this particular point, and I shall require more than Felger's unsupported statement to the contrary to induce me to recognize his alleged correction. Even admitting that he is correct, for the sake of argument, the spirit which prompted the publication of such a correction is too apparent to call for any remarks.

Now, in conclusion, I wish to state that I at all times welcome criticism and corrections of my work, when it is offered in a friendly spirit and is sincere, and I am continually asking for criticism and advice from those Ornithological friends whom I consider *competent to criticize*, but when one or more persons resort to the columns of a standard magazine as a means of discrediting me before its readers, for the satisfaction of a personal grudge, I feel that it is my privilege and my duty to myself to answer such attacks.

Very truly yours,
ROBT. B. ROCKWELL.

PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

THE THIRD EDITION of BAILEY'S 'HANDBOOK OF BIRDS OF THE WESTERN UNITED STATES' * appeared early in the year and attests to the popularity of the work. It remains our only good local text-book of birds, and we hope that further editions will be warranted in the not distant future.

The third edition of the "Handbook" presents no decided alterations as compared with the first and second. However, all errors discovered have been corrected, many of the photographs of bird-skins have been replaced with drawings, and the forms of *Astragalinus* have been revised in the text to accord with the late rulings of the A. O. U. Committee.—J. G.

BIRDS AND MAMMALS OF THE 1907 ALEXANDER EXPEDITION TO SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA. By JOSEPH GRINNELL, EDMUND HELLER, FRANK STEPHENS, and JOSEPH DIXON. Univ.

* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston; \$3.50.